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Opposition Nears Victory in Caracas

CARACAS, Dec. 8 (UPI)—Rafael Caldera, loser in four previous tries at Venezuela's presidency, was just a step away today from winning it.

The 52-year-old Christian Democrat, front-runner since the vote-counting started a week ago, held an apparently unbeatable lead over rival Gonzalo Barrios of the ruling Democratic Action Party.

Supreme Electoral Council figures put Caldera 26,519 votes ahead of Barrios with 3,501,697 ballots computed. With only four states still having votes outstanding, Barrios was given almost no chance of catching up with Caldera.

Caldera's apparent victory was indirectly conceded earlier today by Luis Beltran Prieto, who was running in fourth place behind independ-

ent Miguel Angel Burelli Rivas. Prieto said only a miracle could give the victory to Barrios.

Barrios' defeat would signal the end of 10 years of government for his Democratic Action Party. Barrios, however, continued to insist that only the Supreme Electoral Council could proclaim the winner.